

REMARKS

Claims 1-17 and 19-45 are presently pending in this application. Claim 18 has been cancelled, and claims 19-23 have been amended in this response. More specifically, claims 19-21 and 23 have been rewritten in independent form without changing the scope of these claims.

In the Office Action mailed September 6, 2005, claims 18 and 22 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the claims in light of this Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 18 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Patent No. 54-158081 to Minami et al. ("Minami");

(B) Claims 19-21 and 23 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the features of the claim from which they depend; and

(C) Claims 1-17 and 24-45 were allowed.

A. Response to the Section 102(b) Rejection

Claims 18 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Minami. Claim 18 has been cancelled in this response and therefore the rejection of this claim is now moot. Claim 22 has been amended to depend from claim 19, which was indicated to be allowable. Therefore, the Section 102(b) rejection of claim 22 should be withdrawn.

B. Response to the Objection to Claims 19-21 and 23

Claims 19-21 and 23 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the features of the claim from which they depend. Claims 19-21 and 23 have been amended accordingly. Therefore, the objection to these claims should be withdrawn.

C. Allowed Claims 1-17 and 24-45

Although the applicants' attorney agrees with the Examiner's conclusion that these claims are allowable, the applicants' attorney notes that the claims may be allowable for reasons other than those identified by the Examiner and does not concede that the Examiner's characterization of the terms of the claims and the prior art are correct.

D. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the claims pending in the application comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and patentably define over the applied art. The applicants accordingly request reconsideration of the application and a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned representative at (206) 359-6465.

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Respectfully submitted,

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